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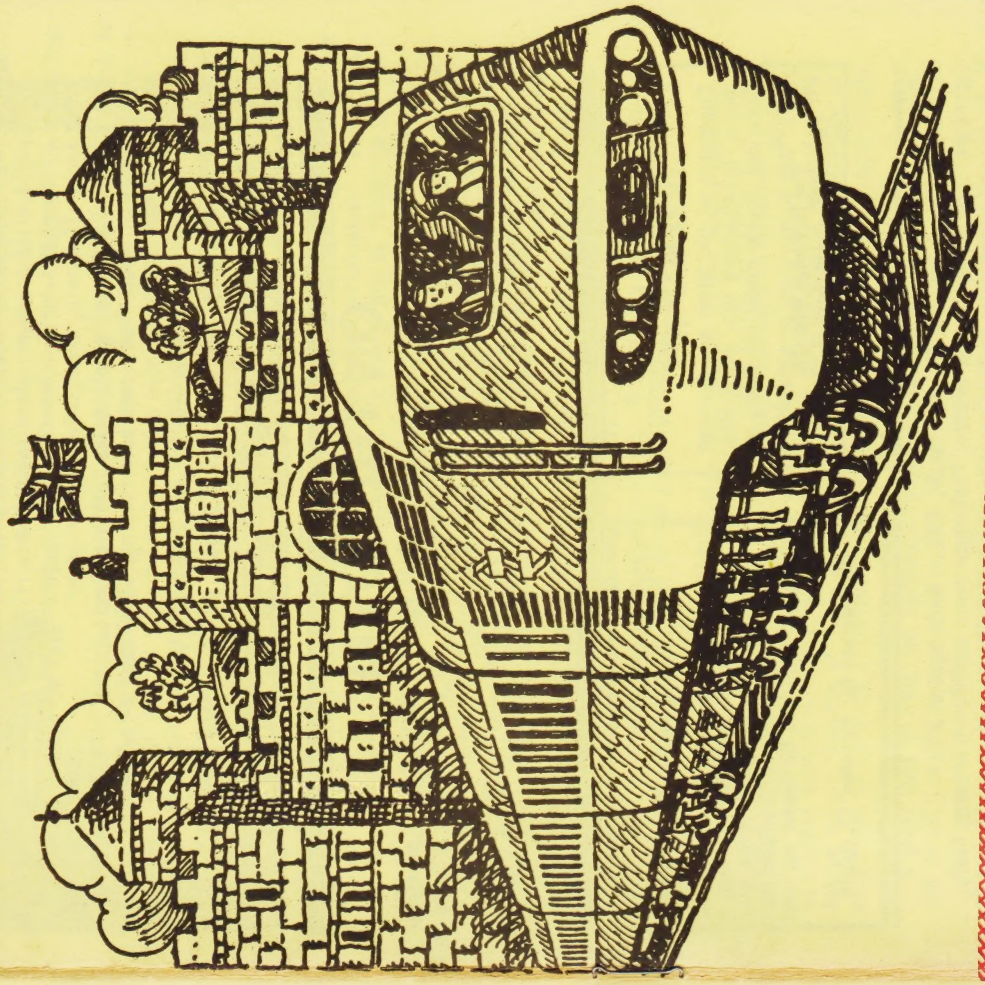

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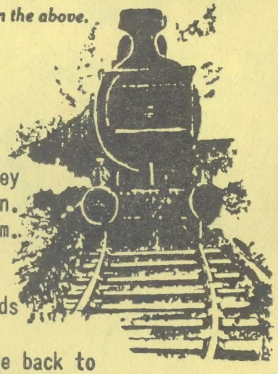

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ON THE COVER

As the United States foolishly prepares to cut back its national rail passenger system, other civilized nations promote theirs as national assets. This drawing is from a current BritRail Travel ad, and depicts a British High Speed Train with a castle in the background. Notes the ad, "...you can travel...all over England, Scotland and Wales--a choice of 14,000 trains a day, including the 125mph high-speed expresses."

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AMTRAK FACES ITS BIGGEST CHALLENGE YET AS DEBATE ON 1982 BUDGET BEGINS IN CONGRESS

The Reagan budget was formally presented to Congress on Mar 10, and hearings were already underway on the Amtrak budget for Fiscal Year 1982, which begins next October. At a press briefing on Mar 10, DOT Secretary Drew Lewis spoke of Amtrak in highly negative terms, making it clear that he wants to cut Amtrak back 75% to make it "fundamentally a corridor line." Lewis said "It's almost ridiculous in that we are attempting to run rail lines in areas that should be better served by buses or some other mode of transportation." Said Lewis, "We'll take a strong stand on Amtrak because we cannot see it becoming profitable or even breaking even at any time in the foreseeable future." The Administration's proposed budget for Amtrak for FY 1982 is $613 million total, less than the $669 million mentioned in February, and far less than the $716 million plus $250 million for capital expenditures asked for by Amtrak. (The Carter administration's projections for FY 1982 had been $993 million including capital funds.)

Amtrak president Alan S. Boyd said that the proposed budget would reduce Amtrak to "essentially" the Northeast Corridor and would cause the layoffs of 23,000 Amtrak employees. In testimony to a House Transportation Subcommittee on Mar 10 and to a Senate Transportation Subcommittee on Mar 13, Boyd asked for a continuation of its regular budget levels to allow it time to negotiate with labor unions and increase its employee productivity as an economy measure. Boyd indicated that under the Administration's proposed budget, only one quarter of the present system could be operated. Because of fixed expenses, only the Corridor could be operated for the proposed $613 million.

Arthur D. Lewis, president of the American Bus Association, also testified on Mar 13, and he made it clear that he would like to see Amtrak eliminated. "We believe the Amtrak experiment has gone on long enough. It should now be forced to pay its way or get out of business" he said. He said that Amtrak was competing with "the poor, the handicapped and the helpless" for Federal funds.

There apparently is a conflict in philosophy within the Administration on how Amtrak should deal with budget cuts. While the Office of Management and Budget talked about raising fares drastically, the DOT favors cutting routes instead, and apparently the DOT view has won out in the final budget proposal.

The National Association of RR Passengers testified before a Congressional Subcommittee on Mar 10. NARP's Ross Capon told Congressmen that the Administration's recommended funding level would "quickly kill Amtrak and all of its service" (see full testimony starting on page 4). "Politically and economically, the Corridor, with just 26.7% of Amtrak passenger-miles, cannot survive alone", NARP said.

Hearings were held by the Transportation Subcommittee of the Senate Commerce Committee on Mar 13, and will be held by the Transportation Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Mar 23. Senator Danforth of Missouri is chairman of the former, and Senator Andrews of North Dakota is chairman of the latter. Washington sources said that "Congress is treading very carefully" regarding the Amtrak budget, knowing it has a hot potato in its hands. The full committees of each house of Congress could accept their subcommittees' reports, but most likely each committee will hold its own hearings also.

A great deal of reaction favorable to Amtrak has come out in the media so far, and we will review some of this on page 15.

Rail passenger supporters are urging all persons interested in rail travel to write letters or telegrams immediately to their Senators and Congressmen in support of Amtrak funding. The address of all Senators is: Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510. Congressmen's address is: House Office Building, Washington DC 20515.

★ NARP TESTIFIES TO HELP SAVE AMTRAK ★

The following is the complete text of testimony by the National Association of Railroad Passengers before the House Subcommittee on Transportation, Commerce and Tourism of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, March 10.

★ ★ ★

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to present the views of our Association, which is non-profit, consumer-oriented, and supported entirely by membership dues and contributions. We receive no financial support from the government, Amtrak, the railroads, or the rail labor unions.

I. Summary

We generally support Amtrak's position, including discontinuance of the Washington-Cincinnati "Shenandoah" and reduction of "Broadway Ltd." car-miles by establishing direct Washington-Pittsburgh service, and the discontinuance of the Houston-Temple and Laredo-San Antonio legs of the "Inter-American." We do oppose discontinuance of the "Cardinal" (Washington-Charleston, WV-Cincinnati-Chicago), which we believe meets the criteria, and we oppose elimination of all daily service in Texas.

The high ridership levels Amtrak has continually experienced since late 1978 show that the market is there. According to many rider reports and our own experiences, this also reflects a big improvement in the quality of service offered on the trains. We believe that the market is on the verge of a major increase because many "second automobiles" are wearing out and people are increasingly likely to move to public transport rather than to purchase a new car.

In this connection, Amtrak's capital request which you have already authorized is particularly crucial because it could help assure maintenance of at least two U. S. manufacturers of rail passenger cars. That in turn would put people to work building for transportation that people can afford and provide Amtrak with the capacity that would enable it to come closer to meeting the demand.

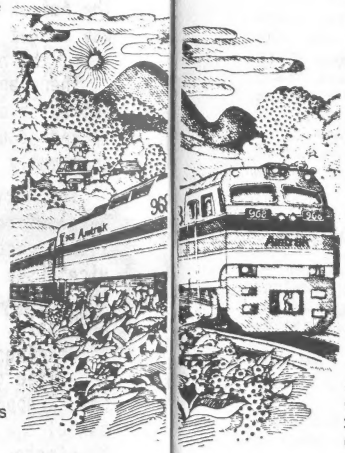
We believe that the Administration request would kill Amtrak. This would happen outside the Northeast Corridor (NEC) instantly. Then, the NEC would fail politically and economically--the latter because subsidy per passenger-mile would skyrocket with the loss of the 73.3% of system passenger-miles that were generated outside the NEC in 1980.

We cannot fight inflation by forcing people back into automobiles. Such a policy would also jeopardize our national security both by increasing our dependence on oil imports and by preventing development of significant rail passenger capacity for civilian use in a national emergency when our commercial airliners might be required for troop movements. Indeed, one could argue that "defense" is a label more properly applied to rail projects than to Interstate highways.

II. The Market is There

In 1979, we argued that most new train riders would stay with Amtrak after gasoline availability ceased to be a problem. Amtrak's projections assumed retention of only 25% of the energy-crisis-induced ridership--roughly what happened after the 1973-74 oil embargo. In fact, Amtrak's FY '80 ridership was 3.4% higher than in the preceeding year (excluding from the FY '79 count the ridership on those long-distance trains discontinued at the end of FY '79, for accurate comparison).

As the following table indicates, the ridership increases occurred precisely where the Administration's plan would hit hardest--outside the NEC. In fact, the table understates demand for the long-distance trains because only those trains are all-reserved and the table doesn't include potential riders Amtrak had to turn away for lack of space. (Standing-room only is a regular occurrence on some short-distance trains.) The NEC, of course, suffered from construction-related reliability problems and slower schedules. Now, it suffers further from cutrate air fares which New York Air



probably will not be able to maintain over the long run. In FY 1980,

Amtrak Ridership (change from year before)

	FY '80	1st Quarter FY '81
NEC	10,780,368 (-1.7%)	2,524,762 (-7.6%)
Other Short Dist.	4,607,374 (+10.9%)*	1,171,461 (+16.5%)*
Long Distance	5,769,967 (+8.0%)*	1,375,863 (+10.9%)

*The "Other Short Distance" percentage increases would be slightly lower if allowing for startup during FY '80 of some new services. The "Long Distance" FY '80 increase would be slightly lower if discontinued trains were included in the FY '79 number.

long-distance trains accounted for 57.3% of Amtrak's passenger-miles; Northeast Corridor 26.7%; and Other Short Distance trains 15.8%.

The public evidently took this second energy crisis more seriously. The idea that energy supply is an ongoing problem--not a fluke of 1973-74--began to sink in, as did the impact of increased operating and ownership costs associated with automobiles. A recent Hertz survey found that the 20-city average cost per-mile for subcompacts was 40.3¢, for small midrange cars 44.5¢, for intermediates 46.6¢, and for fullsize cars 51¢ (assuming 10,000 miles per year for 3 years; keeping cars 5 years cuts the cost about 3.5¢ per mile). Remember also that 16% of U. S. households own no car and the number is rising. Furthermore, those who are buying new cars are probably buying small cars less comfortable for intercity travel.

A solid indication of Amtrak's improved service quality, including much-improved on-time performance, is the sharp decline in complaints. In FY '80, passenger complaints were down 40% from the previous year on long-distance routes, and down 50% on short-distance routes excluding Metroliners. Specific trains which received improved equipment early in FY '80 showed even more dramatic results: Chicago-Seattle "Empire Builder" down 79.0% and Boston/NY-Chicago "Lake Shore Ltd." down 80.9%.

Amtrak finally has a consistently acceptable product, and the public is responding positively.

III. The President's Response

Secretary Lewis deserves credit for accurately labeling the 80% cost recovery goal as "not practical." We think Congress hit it about right in the 1979 law (cover "at least 44% of operating expenses, excluding depreciation, from revenues by the end of FY '82 and 50% by the end of FY '85"). At the time, even that looked a bit conservative and some at Amtrak feared it would force short-run fare increases inconsistent with long-run needs to develop a volume market. Since then, big jumps in fuel and auto ownership costs have combined to justify the goals Congress set in 1979.

Of course it remains to be seen just what goals Lewis will support, and it was frustrating to hear him highlight the "Shenandoah" in spite of the fact that that train is in an "uneconomic" class by itself. Amtrak and NARP both support its discontinuance.

The only number we have from the Administration is $613 million. It seems clear to us that this would barely fund the NEC. The high fixed costs of rail passenger service mean that much service could be added at relatively little cost in operating support. At the same time, modest cutbacks from the funding level Amtrak has requested produce severe service reductions.

OMB's "black book" says the NEC alone would cost $400-500 million to operate. Amtrak says about $100 million is needed in FY '82 to pay for new-car construction underway (and for which Amtrak received a FY '82 appropriation one year in advance). Finally, labor protection payments associated with discontinuing everything outside the NEC could easily exceed $200 million during the first year.

OMB's talk about fare increases assuming no demand elasticity therefore appears to be a smokescreen distracting us from the fact that the President's budget request will not fund service outside the NEC.

Yet there are sound economic reasons for keeping Amtrak. Its operating cost recovery ratio is improving--from 38.3% in FY '78 to 41.1% in FY '80 and about on target so far this year. This is in the ballpark with U. S. transit systems, which now average about 43%. Foreign national railroads fluctuate widely. In general, those nations with the lowest fares-to-costs ratio also have the lowest dependence on the private automobile. Belgium and Italy are both at about 33%. France is just over 55%.

We are concerned about the Administration's emphasis on "market forces" respecting rail in the absence of similar apparent concerns with respect to highways. As The Washington Post editorialized Feb. 21, "the net result of (the Reagan transport agenda) would be to make transportation by air, rail and water even more expensive while that by highways would remain as it is."

Even if the President is successful in his efforts to raise air and water user charges, no one is contemplating recovering the sunk costs of previous capital investments--estimated by Secretary Coleman in a 1977 report as $15.8 billion for air prior to 1971 imposition of user taxes, and estimated in President Reagan's plan as $6 billion to date for water. Nor is anyone seriously contemplating charging air, water, or highway users for the "opportunity cost" of federal dollars or the government's services as banker for these modes.

There are these further considerations:

* The highway trust fund now collects less than it pays out--by a margin of $100 million in FY '79 and $1.6 billion in FY '80.

* In spite of this, highways are deteriorating.

* A substantial level of highway funding does not come from users but from general and property taxes, including funding for local streets, traffic control and other police functions, and snow removal.

* Highway and air users do not pay for the social costs they impose (noise, air, and water pollution, and congestion) and their facilities are tax exempt.

Thus, it appears that the Administration's approach to rail is an attempt to knock off a program perceived (as usual, from the White House) as politically vulnerable. It is not part of a truly comprehensive attempt to restore the rules of the marketplace to transportation. I realize that we do not yet have the last word on the President's transportation policy, since DOT is not fully staffed and the Federal Railroad Administrator has only been on the job briefly.

The "black book" says the federal government shouldn't "subsidize travel between two points when the private sector offers common carrier bus and air travel services." What is the "private sector"? DOT's 2nd Progress Report on the Highway Cost Allocation Study, released in January, says: "Buses pay virtually no share of their cost responsibility under" either the existing tax structure or that proposed in the report "because their exemption from nearly all user taxes is assumed to continue."

The bus/rail relationship should be primarily complementary, not competitive. We think rail and bus can expand their joint work to gain more riders for both modes. The State of Oregon received good cooperation from Trailways and Greyhound in production of a single timetable showing the Portland-Eugene service of both bus companies and Amtrak. One gets in one glance more service information than any but the most persistent layman would otherwise get.

Opponents of Amtrak often present statistics showing that a substantial percentage of Amtrak passengers would ride the bus if the train didn't exist. In the report, "Rail Passenger Corridors: Evaluation Method and Ranking," the figure was 28%, based on an Amtrak survey which asked its passengers a hypothetical question about what they would do in the absence of rail passenger service. Actual results may be different. Oregon recently established a mini-corridor Amtrak service between Portland and Eugene and took the occasion to ask riders on the new service about their travel habits in the corridor prior to inauguration of the new trains. This survey indicated virtually no one on the train had ridden the bus, whereas a substantial percentage of people surveyed aboard buses had also ridden the single train Amtrak previously offered on the

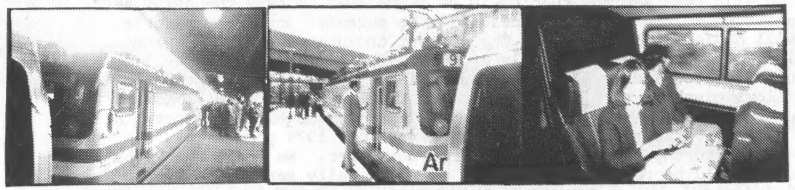
route. In England, introduction of High Speed Trains between London and Bristol was accompanied by an increase in bus ridership!

	London-Bristol			London-South Wales		
	CAR	TRAIN	BUS	CAR	TRAIN	BUS
Mar., 76	69	26	5	73	23	4
Mar., 77	58	36	6	67	29	4

Abandonment of rail passenger service means much greater dependence on the private automobile. We think this would be the wrong policy for the government to pursue, just at a time when public acceptance of public transport is growing rapidly and when the quality of public transport is likewise improving rapidly.

Implementation of the President's budget request for Amtrak would constitute an irrevocable dismantling of the system. Already, speed limits have been lowered on much of the mileage that Amtrak abandoned in 1979, and some of the track has been abandoned. "Railbanking" sounds nice. In practice, however, it is hard to think of a weaker claim on the Federal treasury than payments to a railroad on behalf of a non-existent passenger train. Not surprisingly, the "railbanking" provision in the 1979 law has had little effect.

The abandonment of stations, particularly in major cities where they may occupy good real estate, is another insuperable obstacle to service reestablishment that could stem from implementing the President's request. True, one can always put a little modular station in an outlying suburb, but such locations cannot attract the volume business that would be needed to justify service restoration.



The biggest cost of dismantling the system would be the lost opportunity to continue to develop a mode whose benefits are recognized by every other nation. As Former Secretary John A. Volpe wrote to you, Mr. Chairman, two years ago: "Our friends abroad in every industrialized nation can't all be wrong. They are far ahead of us in developing new passenger train systems to meet growing demand and to offer their citizens an alternative to higher fuel costs and shortages."

If we dismantle Amtrak's national system, and the American public continues to get squeezed out of our dominant "fly/drive" network, the public may react strongly against those in Washington who were responsible for eliminating the rail alternative.

IV. An Appropriate Response

We think that Amtrak management is on the right track. We particularly applaud their efforts to see that the U. S. will continue to have at least our minimal existing capacity to manufacture rail passenger cars. That effort has included working with Thrall Car Manufacturing Company of Chicago Heights and Kawasaki Heavy Metals Industries, which may take over the Hammond, IN, plant that Pullman is scheduled to close this Friday, March 13.

We believe some of the cuts Amtrak has proposed are unjustified. As we understand Amtrak's FY '81 projections, they are:

	Loss/Passenger-Mile	Psgr-Miles/Train-Mile
Cardinal	9¢	121
Revised Inter-American	9.6¢	152
Current Inter-American	12¢	117
Shenandoah	21¢	43

This leaves no doubt that the Shenandoah should be discontinued. But the "Cardinal" meets the Loss/PM criterion (which is 10¢ inflated for 1982). We believe it would also meet the PM/TM criterion if creditted with the extension of service to New York City, which is scheduled for April 26, and the diversion of passengers from the "Shenandoah." (Both trains run on

overnight schedules between Washington and Cincinnati.) A further consideration is the conservative record of Amtrak's market research function. As noted on page 2, Amtrak was way off in 1979 when it projected retention of only 25% of energy-crisis-induced ridership and wound up with almost 100%.

In Texas, we support eliminating the Temple-Houston section of the "Inter-American," and recognized before it was inaugurated that it could not succeed. Its principle function has been to make the San Antonio service slower and less reliable because of the switching in Temple. There is a need for good Dallas-Houston service on a direct route but we agree this is not the year--particularly absent state funding.

We support elimination, for now, of Laredo-San Antonio service. We had previously urged Amtrak to reschedule this inconvenient, middle-of-the-night service as a separate train designed to connect with the Mexican train and to attract local daylight business. We hope a convenient bus connection to the Mexican train can be scheduled and that Amtrak willkeep this possibility in mind for future expansion, possibly involving a direct extension of the Mexican train to San Antonio.

We cannot support reduction of the St. Louis-San Antonio "Inter-American"to tri-weekly. This would mean there would be only tri-weekly service for the entire state of Texas (whose east-west "Sunset" is already tri-weekly) and for Dallas, the nation's 10th largest SMSA, and a city which has done as much as any to make its Amtrak station the focal point of the city.

In defense of daily service, I would again note the evidence that Amtrak's market projections are conservative. In addition, there may be specific cost savings that could be negotiated to save the daily service. Even if the daily service cannot be squeezed into the criteria, it will obviously come close. The current train is at 117 PM/TM and would go up substantially simply as a result of discontinuing the lightly-used Houston and Laredo legs. Legislative language might be devised to allow Amtrak to retain a train that stood to benefit from "emerging corridors" work. Whatever the solution, our members cannot forget that the Chicago-Texas service which emerged from the 1979 process was the one restructuring obviously doomed from the start. We don't think the riders should be penalized with loss of their daily service because of 1979 decisions that were out of their hands and clearly not in the best interests of the long-term survival of Chicago-Texas service.

More on cost savings. I noted with appreciation Clark Tyler's comment before this Subcommittee last week that Amtrak viewed the Administration's challenge as an opportunity to deal with some of the "more oppressive costs" we face. This brings to mind the labor costs, among others.

I've heard the comment: Chrysler workers have compromised, why not rail labor? The answer might be: the Administration has stated it wants to do everything reasonable to save Chrysler, whereas Mr. Stockman obviously wants to eliminate Amtrak and Secretary Lewis has labeled Amtrak an "economic disaster." Why make big concessions when the likely outcome is that OMB will say: "Good! We can cut that much more out of the budget without additional service cuts." If, on the other hand, Congress shows that it is not about to let Amtrak die, rail labor might be able to justify some of the changes which are needed to reduce Amtrak's costs.

V. Inflation

Everyone agrees the last election was a mandate to fight inflation. How do we do that by forcing people back into automobiles and by reinforcing the main cause of our $91 billion/year expenditure on imported oil? A strong case can be made that over-reliance on the energy-wasteful fly/drive system has fuelled inflation. The transportation sector consistently leads the consumer price index. Dramatically so from December to January, when the CPI rose 0.7% and transportation rose 2.5%. That did not even reflect decontrol of oil. It also appears that heavy dependence on efficient rail passenger and public transit services help permit West Germany and Japan, countries that import 97 and 100% of their oil respectively, to keep inflation to roughly one-third the U. S. level.

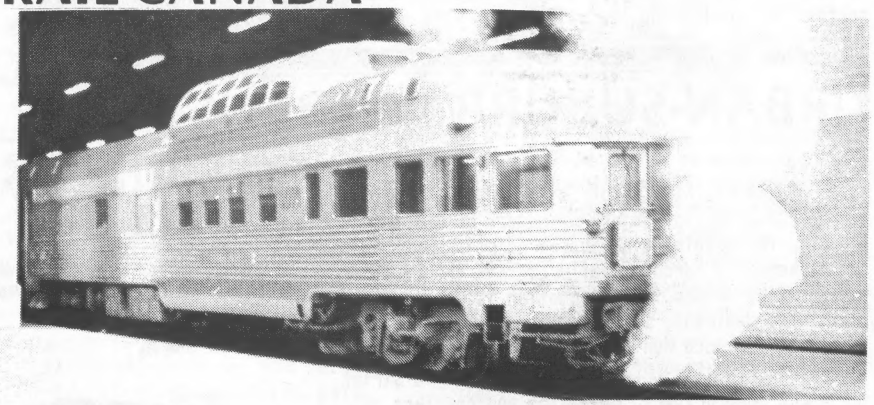
Both Mr. Stockman, in his "Dunkirk" memo, and a noted energy stocks analyst, Albert J. Anton, Jr., of Carl H. Pforzheimer & Co. (Wall Street Week, public television, Feb. 27) expect a tightening of the oil market and significant price increases later this year. The President's "Economic

Recovery" plan states: "It is probable that the cost of owning and operating one's car will continue to increase faster than the inflation rate...." But the Plan does not appear to reflect appreciation of the full implications of that; it simply uses those cost increases to justify sharper increases in mass transit fares and ending federal operating subsidies.

We must not abandon an Amtrak system averaging around 80 passenger-miles-per-gallon, with the potential to exceed 100, in favor of an air system that will average about 30 and autos at about 60!

(The above testimony was given by NARP Executive Director Ross Capon.)

RAIL CANADA



SWIRLING STEAM CLOUDS in the above photo point up the fact that VIA still is operating with non-electrified equipment. The photo, taken by Tom Higgins, shows dome observation car "Sibley Park" on VIA's CANADIAN. The car sports VIA's new drumhead used on the CANADIAN (not all "Park" cars have them yet). These dome observations are being run on all CANADIAN trains, and reports are that some of the cars are being converted to full lounge cars. More than half of the former CP cars in the CANADIAN consists have been refurbished inside.

DISRUPTION OF SERVICE that occurred during the Christmas-New Year's period on VIA because of heavy winter weather (see RTN #217) was the subject of newspaper ads placed by VIA apologizing for delays. Under the headline "We've all been a little under the weather lately", VIA said: "Frankly, it's been awful and all forms of transportation have been affected. The deluge of rain in B.C. caused landslides in the Fraser Canyon. Central Canada has been in the grip of a record cold spell. And the Maritimes have had to cope with paralysing snow falls. Thru all of this, while some means of transportation were completely immobilized, VIA Rail Canada managed to get its passengers to their destinations. That we did so was due in no small measure to a supreme effort by our employees across Canada. They did a superb job under very trying conditions. But, even we had a few problems weathering the storm..." One observer writes that we should not be too hard on VIA--"The Canadians I spoke to were more understanding, and stated that frequently only the train ran at all. Airplanes were literally frozen to the runway, and buses had frozen motors. As one old man put it, 'Better late than never.'" One victim of the weather was the Yarmouth to Halifax Dayliner, which got stuck in snow outside of Clementsport for over 3 hours on Jan 20.

SUDBURY-WHITE RIVER, Ontario Dayliner has been ordered restored by the Canadian Transport Commission. The tri-weekly train had been discontinued last fall, supposedly to be replaced by flagstops of the transcontinental train. During the period May 15-Sep 15, the CTC ordered, frequency must be increased to 6 trips weekly.

CP RAIL MUST continue operation of its Hull-Maniwaki, Quebec line for at least three more years, the CTC has ordered. Deficits on the line will be covered by the federal government.

BRITISH COLUMBIA RAILWAY'S reduced service effective Feb 16 (see last issue) has been augmented somewhat: North Vancouver-Lillooet is now 5 times weekly, leaving each direction on Fri, Sat, Sun, Mon & Wed. N. Vancouver departure is 6:30am with an 11:55am arrival. Lillooet departure is 3:10pm with arrival at 8:35pm. The N. Vancouver-Prince George service still runs once a week only--leaving N. Vancouver on Monday at 6:30am, to arrive Prince George at 8:40pm. Prince George departure is on Sunday at 6:30am, with arrival time 8:35pm. No food is carried on the Dayliner, so half-hour food stops are made at Lillooet and Williams Lake. The B.C. government has asked the railway to rescind these service cutbacks, and the BCR told RTN that its Board of Directors is considering the matter, and word of a decision should be out by Apr 6 or 13.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

SOUTHERN PACIFIC COMMUTE line from San Francisco to San Jose is the subject of a fare promotion in March. The adjoining newspaper ad points out that on weekends in March a family of five can ride for only one paid fare. The promotion is sponsored by Caltrans, SamTrans, Santa Clara County Transit and the San Francisco Muni Railway.

PHILADELPHIA'S SEPTA SYSTEM was hit by a strike of about 5000 drivers, mechanics and cashiers on Mar 15. The following day's commute hours were "chaotic". About 400,000 riders normally use the vehicles--subway, trolleys and buses--idled by the labor dispute. Conrail commuter lines continued to operate.

NEW YORK'S MTA is leasing from Amtrak the following cars for use on commuter trains out of Grand Central: nos. 6007, 6010, 6011, 6016, 6017, and 6018.

THE "PARKWAY LIMITED", a new commuter train between Pittsburgh and Greensburg PA, had its first runs on Mar 3 and will continue thru 1982 (and possibly longer if ridership showing is good). The runs, being sponsored by PennDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (!) are to provide service while Parkway East, the area's only limited-access highway, is being reconstructed, a job that will take two years. The equipment used is leased from Amtrak: coaches 4404, 4401, 4846, 4844, 5685, 5424, 5430, 4470 and 5406, lounge 3302, and heater car 673. Conrail operates the trains, and currently has U36-B engines 2971 and 2972 assigned to them. There are two roundtrips daily between Pittsburgh and Greensburg and two between Pittsburgh and Pitcairn. Daily ridership so far is running around 350. In operation, one engine pulls the train and a second follows it. At destination, the following unit is coupled on and pulls the train backwards in the other direction, with the original unit following. The lounge does not serve food or beverage, but officials are considering finding a concessionaire to operate it in the future.

THE B&M-MBTA Boston-New Hampshire points commuter trains were discontinued, with the last runs being Feb 28. Equipment was immediately deadheaded back to Boston after its arrival in Concord NH at 7:35pm (due 6:56 but delayed by masses of "last-day" riders). Passengers were allowed to ride the deadhead train back to Boston or intermediate stops. Consist of the last run was (MBTA equipment) F40 engine 1007; cars Pullman-Standard coaches 318, 340, 339, 314 and 1300. (continued on page 19)

RIDING MEXICO'S "WILD WEST" TRAIN

by Sylvia Blishak

My first look at the rugged Sierra Madre range was from the window of the first-class dining room of a Pan Am 747, headed for Central America, on Nov 27, 1978. Even from that distance, I was awed by the craggy isolation of these vast mountains that stretch for endless miles with almost no evidence of human habitation. Two years later, I crossed these same mountains by train on Mexico's Ferrocarril de Chihuahua al Pacifico.

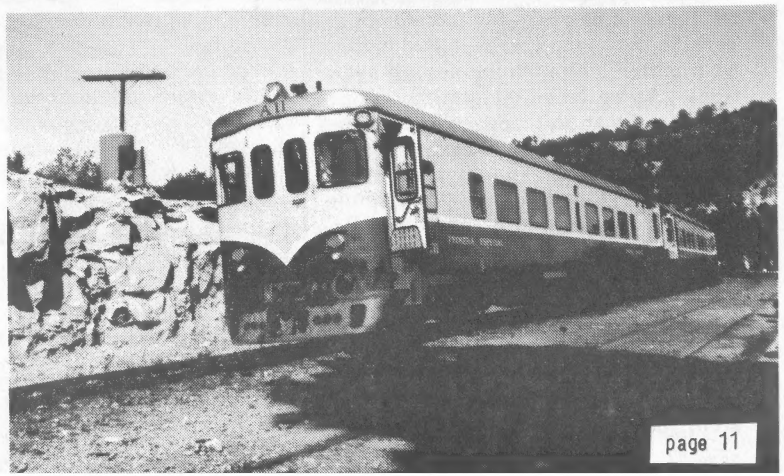
NOV. 7, 1980, Chihuahua, Mexico: My first Mexican train ride begins when I climb aboard the Fiat self-propelled diesel bound for Los Mochis, 400 miles to the southwest. This railroad does not employ porters to place stepboxes for you , and wrestling your own luggage is surprisingly difficult! Train #10 consists of two red cars--A-9 and A-11--built in Italy in 1975. They are both labeled "Primera Superior" (First Class). A separate second section of two similar blue cars follows.

I am here with a group of U.S. travel agents on a guided tour. As we leave the station at 8am, there seem to be more people than seats (overbooking is not uncommon on Mexican trains). Our tour leader asks some Mexican passengers to relocate so our group can sit together. I appreciate this when I am assigned to a facing seat, with my knees pressed against those of the man sitting opposite me--twelve hours of this enforced proximity will, at least, be with a companion who speaks English! Everyone except the hapless tour leader eventually finds a seat.

The seats, while short on legroom, are comfortable vinyl with high backs. At one end of the car is a small snack bar serving sandwiches and bottled drinks. (We've been advised by our tour leader to bring our own picnic.) The car, while grimy outside, is reasonably clean within. The Fiat is smooth and quiet, sounding neither like a bus nor a train. The whistle is a high-pitched, European bleat.

Our stewardess, a young lady named Yolanda, begins to explain our trip over the public address system. "Before the train ends its journey at Los Mochis tonight, it will have crossed 39 bridges, gone thru 86 tunnels, and crossed the summit of the Sierra Madre at 8071 feet!" She tells us that this line, incredible engineering feat that it is, was completed in 1962, bringing much of this area into contact with the outside world for the first time.

We begin to climb out of the arid Chihuahua plateau and soon reach rocky cactus-covered hills where rock fences wind off towards the horizon in random patterns. Suddenly, we're among green



Train 10 of the Chihuahua Pacific consisted of two Fiat self-propelled cars. Photos by the author.

fields of oats, corn and sunflowers, and now some impossibly steep mountains loom ahead. "This area was colonized 52 years ago by Mennonite farmers from Canada," Yolanda explains. These individualistic people were looking for an isolated spot where they could farm and pursue their religion and lifestyle without interference. The Mexican government leased the land to them on a 50-year contract, and when that expired, the Mennonites became Mexican citizens. By custom, they educate their children only to about sixth-grade level. This is to discourage them from learning worldly ways which might tempt them away from their simple, pastoral existence.

Our Fiat climbs rapidly and effortlessly thru constantly changing terrain until we stop at La Junta. Here, a vendor has set up a stand with what looks like two coils of rope. It turns out to be a deep-fried pastry, like a tough doughnut, which the adventurour gourmet may purchase by the inch.

A crowd of people, mostly cowboys and Indians, mill about on the platform but there is no room for more passengers on our train (perhaps they will have better luck with the second section). As we leave the station, an angry-faced man in a cowboy hat hurls a rock at our window. Luckily, it doesn't break!

We enter wild-looking country now. There are no highways, and the railroad is the only link to the civilized world. At 2pm we get out and stretch our legs at Divisadero Barrancas, on the rim of Urique Canyon. Colorfully dressed Tarahumara Indian women are sitting on the ground at the station weaving baskets. We have a 15-minute stop, just time enough to walk over to the edge of the precipice where the gigantic and lonely canyon, its rugged floor 3000 feet below, yawns at our feet. There is a hotel here, perched a few feet from the edge. Some Indians live nearby in crude wooden shacks; others dwell in cliffs on the canyon's rim. These small, shy people are capable of running after wild game until their quarry drops from exhaustion! They also enjoy a kickball game which sometimes lasts up to 72 hours--quite an accomplishment at 8000 feet above sea level! No wonder this railroad has adopted a picture of a running Tarahumara Indian as their logo.

We reboard the Fiat and continue thru wildly intriguing mountains, but fatigue soon sets in--and at about the same time, the air conditioning fails. We stop for attempted repairs which fail to lower the temperature, but succeed in putting us far behind schedule. We press on, past peaks and gorges, hour after hour, knee to knee, with waning enthusiasm and 90-degree heat inside our sealed train. By the time darkness falls we have reached the plains on the west side of the mountains, and attempting to make up for lost time, our Fiat rockets thru the night at such speeds that it is impossible to stand or walk without risking losing one's balance. The 12-hour schedule stretches to 15 by the time we arrive at Los Mochis.

NOV. 9, 1980, Los Mochis, Sinaloa.

After our stay in tropical Los Mochis on the fertile coastal plateau (and a side trip to the little fishing village of Topolobampo on the nearby Sea of Cortez) we are ready to recross the Sierra Madre. This time we are scheduled for conventional equipment on train 5. It is 7am, 20 minutes to train time. I take my notebook and walk up to the head end to record the consist.

The train is headed by one EMD SDP -45 engine, painted grey and red, with the running Indian logo of the Chihuahua al Pacifico. I am about to record the engine number when I am distracted by what is behind the engine--two yellow cabooses, of Japanese manufacture, bearing the Hitachi label! Behind the cabooses are the second class coaches, army green with gold letters, bearing numbers 214, 224 and 223. They are labeled "Hecho en Mexico" (Made in Mexico).

Two silver first-class coaches sport the Pullman label and "Cd. de la Paz", and numbers 227 and 228. Next is the dark-green "Comedor" (Dining Car) "Patzcuaro"--#3661--of U.S. manufacture. Bringing up the rear are two grey and blue coaches with red stripes, designated FCP Primera Especial (First Class Special) Numerada 275 and 2337. These cars, made in Japan about eight years ago, bear no visible builder's plate. Old-fashioned lanterns hung on the rear of the last car serve as markers.

I notice some shattered windows which have been repaired by placing new glass over the old, broken panes. There is no evidence that this equipment has ever been washed.

I hear a diesel horn, and turn around to watch a second diesel, this one bright orange, coupling up at the point. What a patchwork of colors and nationalities this "conventional" consist is!

I sprint back to join my tour group. Our seats are in the rear first-class special coach. Vendors--most of them about 12 years old--are passing thru the train, hawking newspapers, homemade tamales, and live green parrots.

We pull out of Los Mochis at 7:20am on schedule, and are soon racing across the flat farmlands towards the mountains, which rise in steep cliffs in the distance. A few minutes later, the brakes come on hard with a roar so deafening that I suspect it is the emergency system. We stop in the middle of a deserted cornfield for about 10 minutes. We start again, but a few minutes later, another roar of grinding brakes begins. I race up to the open vestibule, and as we are rounding a curve, I see, thru the dust cloud the engines are leaving, a most incredible sight--the engines and cabooses have separated from the first passenger coach! A sandstorm of dust and grit makes me decide against risking my camera lens to record this event. After we lurch to a halt, a crowd of railroad men forms at the front of our decapitated train, watching the diesels and cabooses backing up to recouple. We start off, and slam to a stop for a third time! Now we are adjacent to a siding. Our troublesome cabooses are spotted there; the diesels couple to the lead passenger car and back up on the crossover. Our two cabooses are added to the rear of the train.

By now I have identified the three other railfans among our group of 30 travel agents: Darlene Schacht and Marletta Wagner from Tucson, and Blanca Henderson who, like myself, lives near San Francisco. (We are surprised that none of the men in our group is a rail buff.) The four of us decide to visit the dining car for a cup of coffee. We are traveling at such high speed now that all of us lose our balance as we lurch around a curve (I end up sprawled across the lap of an unfortunate passenger). We finally reach the "Patzcuaro". I trip over

Near Temoris Station a Caravan Train of RV's on flatcars was seen across the canyon (see page 14).

evidence that the kitchen is equipped with a wood stove--a small piece of firewood lying in the corridor (which remains there thruout the trip!). The diner has white linen tablecloths, complete with coffee stains and toast crumbs and chipped melamine cups and saucers. There are no flowers on the tables. However, we agree that having a dining car, engines and room to walk around makes this a "real" train and therefore more satisfactory than the quieter, faster Fiat.

After our coffee, we stroll back to have a closer look at the wooden caboose coupled onto the back of our coach. The deck of the caboose is six inches lower than the coach, and the caboose coupler is six inches lower too. Perhaps the difference in coupler placement explains the uncoupling problems we had earlier. The cabooses (as cabooses were meant to do) seem content to bring up the rear, and since they now seem firmly attached, we decide to investigate. There is a gate drawn (but not locked) across our rear vestibule, so we leap across and find that our stewardess, Patricia Holgren, is sitting in the cupola! Patricia, who had earlier made an announcement to us about our trip, had invited us to ask questions, so I do.

"What," I ask her, "are cabooses doing on a passenger train?"

Patricia invites me to climb up the ladder into the dusty cupola and explains.

"The railroad is short of engines. We need the cabooses, with the two train crews they are carrying, for a freight that will go out of San Rafael, near the summit, but we had no engine to take them separately."

The view from the high cupola is excellent. We go into siding for a freight and we are looking down at the engines. "Are freights usually given priority?" I ask.

"Yes, since freight costs us too much when it isn't moving. We have just leased six engines from Santa Fe, and they cost us $700 a day. There is much freight traffic into this area: cattle, lumber, and farm products. And there is no highway across these mountains."

The familiar story of freight priority takes on a new twist as she continues. "The National Railway Company of Mexico now builds all our rolling stock. We no longer import any. Three years ago we paid in advance for six first class special coaches. However, the NRC has contracts to build boxcars that will keep them busy until 1985--our passenger coaches will be completed only after those commitments are fulfilled!"

We are into the mountains now, and we halt at a "whistle stop", merely a signpost where three passengers, clad in cowboy boots and hats, wait--no

signs of a station or a village anywhere nearby. We pass Temoris Station, where a giant plaque commemorating the completion of the railroad looms above the tracks.

I notice that the ride (with the exception of the trackage near Los Mochis) is unusually smooth. I mention this to Patricia, and she gives me a flyer that the railroad has published. The smooth track is explained as follows: " TRACK CONSTRUCTION--Construction and improvements of the line include 102 miles of 'elastic' track on concrete ties, 187 miles of elastic track on treated timber ties, and 120 miles of ordinary track on wood ties. The elastic track comprises welded rail--in sections up to six miles long--resting on grooved rubber pads on concrete or wood ties. Bolts, nuts and spring fasteners that maintain constant tension hold the rail in place on concrete ties. Large wood screws and elastic clips hold the rail to the timber ties. The elastic track is said to protect rails and ties as well as rolling stock from jolts, provides a smoother and quieter ride and reduces costs of maintaining both tracks and rolling stock."

As I finish reading about these modern advances in rail construction, I look ahead and see a semaphore at trackside!

Continuing our climb, we pass between two "Caravan Trains" in siding. These special trains consist of flatcars and each flatcar provides a movable campsite for recreational vehicles and their owners. Passengers are sitting in folding chairs, drinking beer, hanging out their laundry--in short, they are camping their way between Mazatlan and Juarez--without touching wheel to road! They wave enthusiastically as we pass--communicating that they are having a grand time.

(To be concluded.)

FROM THE NATION'S PRESS

What the Media Are Saying About the Amtrak Budget

*** From a Los Angeles Times editorial (Feb 18):

"Amtrak's costs, and losses, can be cut by changes in work rules that will reduce its payroll, and by changes in the way it amortizes its debt and supports its terminal facilities. Costs also can be trimmed by reducing expensive service on marginal routes, but those cuts should be made only as part of a package that includes other changes. Congress should avoid the temptation to cut the easy way--by reducing service--and approach the job of reducing the Amtrak subsidy by taking on the entire range of changes that will make the passenger system more efficient."

*** Syndicated columnist Nick Thimmesch, early March:

"A true conservative takes a long-range look at what goes on in this human adventure, and makes judgments accordingly. A true conservative should measure human values as much as analyze ledger books. That's why the Reagan administration should think three times before pushing hard to diminish Amtrak... Our railroad system represents 150 years of investment and work, and is too valuable to discard for the sake of necessary, but short-lived, budget-cutting programs."

*** Long Beach CA Independent/Press-Telegram editorial (Mar 2):

"It can be hoped that Congress will preserve as much of Amtrak as is financially feasible. California is probably in no financial condition at present to offer any subsidies of its own. But California has had considerable rail success--the Los Angeles to San Diego run being the best example--and it would be unfortunate if it lost momentum now."

*** Letter to New York Times by RTN reader Stephen A. Linde (Mar 14):

"The Reagan Administration's proposals for cutbacks in public transportation programs demonstrate a failure to understand the nature of transportation. Economic recovery would be promoted, not hindered, if this country followed the Japanese approach to transportation. Instead of being cut, programs to enhance urban and commuter public transportation, Amtrak and rail freight should be expanded as investments in the infrastructure required for this country's long-term economic health."

*** Don Lattin in San Francisco Examiner (Mar 1):

"By world standards, (sociologist Harvey) Greisman notes, the United States is 'woefully behind' in its support of passenger rail. Great Britain and Germany each have 18,000 passenger rail cars, Japan has 26,000 and Italy has 11,000. In 1979, the United States had just under 2,000. Despite the dreary outlook for continued federal subsidies, (Amtrak VP-corporate communications) Stiner says the national rail corporation 'has turned the corner.' 'There's a good fixed system in place, especially in the West. Our new cars are getting a good return on the investment,' he said. 'It has taken us 10 years, and it's not been a smooth process, but Amtrak is not going to go out of business tomorrow.'"

*** Letter to Los Angeles Herald Examiner by RTN reader John J. Bowman (Feb 22):

"While Europe continues to upgrade its railroads and passenger service, to electrify its railroads, build new types of high speed trains, and maintain a frequency of train service that makes it possible and convenient to use, the United States is about to kill its remaining passenger train service."

*** Wall Street Journal editorial (Mar 12):
"Does it serve some economic purpose to have empty Amtrak trains tooling across the landscape in the American West?"

Mixed Train of Thoughts

IT ISN'T TRUE, contrary to what one might think, that Wall Street Journal editorial writers suffer from senile dementia. There must be some other reason that prevents them from doing their homework before they write their flaky editorials on rail topics. On Mar 11 the Journal published an editorial supporting mass transit budget cuts. When it got down to naming names it said: "Service failures and costs seem worst where the federal government has been most heavily involved, such as San Francisco's BART system and Washington's Metro." If the Journal had bothered to check its facts before setting finger to key it would have discovered that the BART system received less than 20% of its initial costs from the federal government, and they came in only at the tail end of construction. All the rest was from local sources: general bonds, bridge tolls, sales tax, temporary investments and miscellaneous local income. Even today, less than 3% of BART's operating budget comes from federal government sources. And in the case of the Washington Metro we are talking about a city that is governed by the feds. What other major sources of local funds are there?.....

THE NEXT DAY the Wall Street Journal struck out again. In an editorial on the Reagan budget in general, it mentioned at one point Amtrak, in the quotation at the top of this page. Instead of sitting in his cluttered New York office, the editorial writer should try getting space on one of the crowded Western trains that he thinks are empty.....

★ ★ ★

THE WHITE HOUSE has been hitting hard on two themes in its anti-Amtrak campaign. One is that Amtrak trains are rattling around empty. The other is that trains are not energy-efficient. Both are lies. The truth is bound to come out in Congressional hearings (we hope!), but the public that listens to these misrepresentations is going to be misled.....

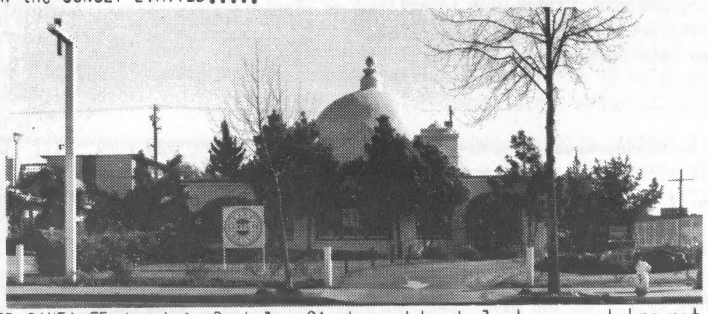
THE NEW DOT under the Reagan administration has to be the most incompetent one since the days of Coleman under President Ford. DOT Secretary Drew Lewis seems to think that he's an economist and not a transportation man, and that his first duty is to see to it that Detroit auto makers make more money. To this end he will (1) relieve them of their social responsibilities to make safer, less polluting cars, (2) kill off their competition, especially Amtrak and mass transit, and (3) reward them for their past mistakes and misjudgements (building gas-guzzling clunkers when the people wanted the economical, well-constructed cars the importers are bringing in). The Wall Street Journal in its Mar 12 editorial stated that Reagan's aim is to "take cash flow out of the public sector" and "put it back into the private sector, where it can be put more efficiently to use." But the government does not have a monopoly on inefficiency. If U.S. car building were a government program, the administration would be entirely justified in calling it a failure and cutting it off.....

AMTRAK'S CLARK TYLER was in San Francisco on Mar 16, and he told reporters that the Administration's proposed budget "would effectively end Amtrak." Said Tyler, "If we had to drop everything but the Northeast Corridor, we would be left with nearly $300 million in new cars that can only be run west of Chicago. We have spent $43 million to improve our yard facility in Chicago. We have a $54 million nationwide ticketing system that would go into place just about the time the trains stop running." Tyler was in the West to attend Amtrak Family Days in Portland the weekend of Mar 14-15 and will also be at the Family Days in Seattle Mar

21-22. An Amtrak spokesman said the Portland Family Days went "extremely well." We'll probably have more details on them later.....

AMTRAK'S ALAN BOYD told Congressman James Florio in a Mar 10 letter that "At the $613 million level (the Reagan proposed budget), each Federal dollar buys 2.5 passenger miles. Under Amtrak's proposal, each Federal dollar buys 7 passenger miles. In this sense, Amtrak's proposal is 2.8 times more cost effective than the Administration's budget." On the same date, he told a Congressional Subcommittee of a 7-point plan for increasing Amtrak's revenues: (1) thru partnership with the private sector--developing NE Corridor property and seeking commercial maintenance contracts; (2) seeking private investors for a $30 million fiber-optics communications network along the NE Corridor; (3) expanding its reservations and ticketing system this fall; (4) introducing more new cars that the Budd Co. is now building; (5) increasing revenue from the 403-B program; (6) increasing fares; and (7) expanding corridor service for new sources of fare-box revenue.....

THE SUPERLINER ORDER has been almost all received now. As of Mar 13 Amtrak had received all 48 coach-baggage cars, all 102 coaches, all 25 lounge-cafes (except that 9 of them had not been formally accepted yet), and 38 of the 70 sleepers ordered. Amtrak said that the first Sightseer lounge would go into regular service on the SOUTHWEST LIMITED leaving Chicago on Mar 13, and one more each night thereafter until all SWL sets had one of the new lounges. They have run before on the SWL, but only in temporary service as they were being ferried west for the COAST STARLIGHT. The lounges are now in regular service also on the EMPIRE BUILDER and the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR. By the end of March, Amtrak predicted, they would appear on the SUNSET LIMITED.....



FORMER SANTA FE depot in Berkeley CA changed hands last year unbeknownst to us until the San Francisco Chronicle ran a rave review on Feb 1 of the new restaurant, the Santa Fe Bar and Grill (photo above). It used to be The Depot steak house. We tried the place for lunch on a Monday in February. Having noted the crowded parking lot, we arrived at 11:30am. By noon the big building was almost full. Food is a spicy, Southwestern cooking with a great deal of mouth-watering variety on the menu. We had a corn soup with radishes and other unidentifiables in it, and a huge chicken breast sandwich on a whole French bread loaf. Prices are quite reasonable, especially for such high quality food. There is no railroad motif at this establishment except that the logo on a big outdoor sign resembles the Santa Fe Railway emblem. There was another rave review of it in the Mar issue of New West magazine...

THE DESERT WIND will get a Superliner diner on Apr 1, replacing the Amdinette. While it will offer cooked food in place of the Amdinette's microwave offerings, the full normal Superliner menu will not be used. The PIONEER will get Superliner cars on Apr 26. Consist will be Superliner coaches, Amdinette, Heritage sleeper and Hi-level transition car. Starting on that date the PIONEER will carry one thru coach Seattle-Chicago via Ogden, switched to and from the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR.....

SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR has been running occasionally a second, overflow sleeper in its Superliner consist, as has the EMPIRE BUILDER and COAST STARLIGHT. Effective Mar 19 the SFZ gets the second sleeper on a regular basis westbound, and eastbound as of Mar 23. These are the dates that will appear in the ARTS system, but the sleepers may be on before those dates.....

AMTRAK'S EMERGING CORRIDORS Report is "on the brink of being released" said an Amtrak spokesman in mid-March.....

THE STATE HOUSE, northbound train 300, was in a collision with a semi-trailer loaded with corn 12 miles north of Springfield IL on Mar 6. There were no injuries in either vehicle, but engine 260 was damaged and the cab was literally filled with ears of corn.....

THE NORTH STAR has been assigned a full Heritage dining car because of heavy first-class patronage of the train. In the last two months the number of business travelers riding overnight between Chicago and Minneapolis has increase enormously. Businessmen have found it an ideally-scheduled train for their needs, as Northwest Airlines doesn't reach Minneapolis before 10am, while the train gets there at 7:15. The diner replaces an Amcafe car.....

AMTRAK FEBRUARY RIDERSHIP and on-time performance in the Midwest may be the best Amtrak has ever had, when final figures are released. Of 29 trains daily coming into Chicago, unofficial counts have found an average of 25 per day ahead of schedule in the last few weeks. The LAKE SHORE LIMITED, train 49, was in 45 minutes early on Mar 11, for example.....

THE BUDD COMPANY in Philadelphia as of Mar 3 was still working on all 12 Connecticut DOT/Amtrak SPV railcars. The major delay has been the replacement of engine mounts (two engines per car) on all the cars. Budd was hoping to have at least two cars back in service by mid-March.....

MORE "GROVE" CARS have come out of the Beech Grove shops' electrification and refurbishing program. These are identified as sleepers 2444 "Magnolia Grove", 2446 "Cypress Grove", 2447 "Sycamore Grove", 2452 "Orange Grove", 2453 "Cedar Grove", and 2454 "Redwood Grove".....

★ ★ ★

AMTRAK'S CENTRAL RESERVATIONS operation at Penn Station, New York, will likely be moved to an unincorporated area, Carle Place Industrial Park, on Long Island. New York city officials strongly oppose the move, and 130 Amtrak employees reportedly have petitioned the rail corporation to stay in New York.....

THE ANN RUTLEDGE departure time from Kansas City will be changed Oct 25 to 8:25am from the present 10:05am to allow travelers to St. Louis to spend more time in that city. At the same time, an experimental stop will be added at Independence, Missouri.....

THE AUTO-TRAIN was cancelled in both directions on Sunday, Mar 8 for lack of enough passengers. The train ran the next day. Normal days off for Auto-Train are Tuesdays and Wednesdays.....

ELECTRIC DEPARTURE BOARD at New York's Penn Station has been working poorly for a number of weeks, on the verge of a total breakdown. Amtrak says plans to replace it are two years in the future, however.....

NEW YORK-TORONTO service is set to begin Apr 26. This evidently will be an extension of the NIAGARA RAINBOW into Canada, with the Canadian leg operated by VIA, but using the Amtrak equipment (see last issue, p. 9, for schedules). At that time, the connecting Conrail/VIA Buffalo-Toronto service will be discontinued (see page 24 of the current Amtrak system timetable).....

THIRD NIAGARA FALLS to New York train wanted by New York's DOT will not be initiated, according to usually reliable sources. Amtrak reportedly said it did not have backup locomotives available to protect the service in the event of a breakdown. The New York DOT is reportedly quite upset about this.....

NEW CORRIDOR FARES were announced by Amtrak in big newspaper ads Mar 3. $24 to Boston or Washington is what the New York ads announce. This price is to counter the $29 air shuttle fare recently introduced by New York Air. The Amtrak fare is available thru Apr 25.....

4449 STEAM LOCOMOTIVE will be moved from Portland OR to Sacramento CA for the May 2 opening of the California State RR Museum, as noted earlier. The NRHS's Pacific Northwest Chapter will sponsor an excursion as part of the engine's movement. The train will run Portland-Klamath Falls on Apr 25 and Klamath Falls to Sacramento Apr 26. Returning, it will run Sacramento-Klamath Falls on May 15 and Klamath Falls-Portland May 16. Complete trip and trip segments are available from NRHS. Send an SASE to the Chapter at Room 1, Union Station, Portland OR 97209.....

NATIONAL ARBITRATION PANEL will "soon" hear Amtrak's case for the overnight Sacramento-Los Angeles train, noted Caltrans director Adriana Gianturco in a Feb 23 letter to Amtrak's Alan Boyd. She expressed concern that the arbitration has blocked for three years any progress in getting other train service on the route, and she asked Boyd to make preparations for additional service between Sacramento and San Jose and between Santa Barbara and Los Angeles--two rountrips on the northerly segment and one on the southern. She also complained that Caltrans' request to extend the SAN JOAQUIN to Los Angeles was put off because of "heavy freight volume." She noted that SP has removed four daily freight movements from the Tehachapi line, and that Caltrans' proposed schedule is already two hours slower than the last passenger train to use the route.....

LATE BUDGET NEWS: NARP reported on Mar 17 that the Senate Budget Committee that day had voted 21 to 1 against giving Amtrak its full request plus the full NE Corridor funding. It then defeated 16 to 6 a proposal by Senator Exon that Amtrak be given $850 million. (NARP noted that Amtrak is now saying that it can operate the full system on $853 million rather than the $966 million it had asked for at first; the difference lies in labor agreements and "other measures".) On Mar 23 the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation will hold hearings, chaired by Senator Andrews, who voted against the above measures. On Mar 18 Congressman Florio is holding hearings on Conrail commuter services, and on Mar 19 on Conrail itself. NARP urged passenger train supporters to "redouble our efforts" on behalf of rail service.....

A NOTE TO SUBSCRIBERS: We have not yet caught up on updating our address labels. If you have renewed recently and are still receiving renewal reminders, please ignore them as part of our effort to keep RTN on schedule. If you do write concerning your subscription, please include the code numbers from one of your labels.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT (continued from p. 10)

coaches 318, 340, 339, 314 and 1300.

PRESIDENT REAGAN'S MEETING Mar 14 with New York Mayor Koch was to include a discussion of the controversial Westway highway project. Mayor Koch has been backing off on the highway project as a way of obtaining more transit money for his city.

NEW YORK COMMUTERS are expecting possible fare increases of from 20 to 50% July 1 and public hearings will be held soon on this matter. The MTA's Board in a heated session on Mar 13 voted to go ahead toward an increase. MTA hearings will be held in May. New Jersey and Connecticut are also facing fare rises, and public hearings will be held in those states as well. A 50% increase in New Jersey is in the offing for bus riders on Jun 27 and for rail commuters on Jul 1. Connecticut will hold hearings in May on a 25% fare hike on its portion of Conrail's New Haven line.

NEW YORK'S MTA was charged by state comptroller Edward Regan Mar 12 with "amateurish bargaining" with the Transport Workers Union last April, leading to an increased cost of $200 million a year for the MTA.

FORMER NASSAU COUNTY Executive Ralph Caso charged in a letter to the New York Times Mar 13 that New York officials had not fulfilled their former promises after passage of the 1979 transportation bond issue. He called on officials to get things rolling on the 1979 promised improvements before discussing their $14 billion in capital needs for the coming decade.

AMTRAK BOARD MEETING by Erich Houchens

The Amtrak Board of Directors' monthly meeting was held in Washington on Feb 25. Awaiting action were three Commitment Approval Requests.

The first CAR (81-59) was to purchase an electronic computer switching system to expand the capacity of Amtrak's ARTS system. In so doing, Amtrak hopes to reduce computer down time caused by system overloads. During busy times, most often in afternoon and evening, ARTS becomes overloaded, causing it to go down. This time can last from 5 mins to 2 hours, causing delays in reservations, ticketing and data transmission. This CAR, for $238,500, was approved by the Board.

The second CAR (81-63), also approved, for $749,500, was to buy a modular office system for the fourth floor of Amtrak's Washington headquarters. This system, thru more efficient use of space, will permit Amtrak to move its remaining employees and computers from its former headquarters to L'Enfant Plaza to 400 North Capitol Street.

The third CAR, for which no dollar amount was specified, was for the fifth and final phase of the Chicago yard rebuilding program. This phase calls for two service tracks, four more car layover tracks and improvements to access roads, employee parking and signalling. This CAR was also approved.

CARS & CONSISTS

*SUNSET LIMITED, train 2, San Antonio Feb 26: engines SP 8331, Atk 642, 537; cars 1114, 2150 "Silver Flower", 4532, 4488, 4540, 4543, 4502, dome 9362 "Mountain View", 8096, 2672 "Silver Hollow", 2671 "Silver Plateau", 2831 "Lebanon Valley", 2675 "Silver Vale", deadheads 2262, 2264, 3321, 3322, 2677; SP office car 100 "Airslie" (compare same consist last issue, taken at L.A. Feb 24); last run of conventional equipment on SUNSET. Same, New Orleans Feb 22: engines 708, 707 (P30s); cars Superliners 31000, 34090, 34073, 34078, 38026, 32007. Train 1, New Orleans Feb 23: engines 702, 704 (P30s); cars Superliners 31000, 34078, 34073, 38023, 32007. Same, Feb 27: engines 642, 537 (SDPs), 708, 709 (P30s); cars Superliner 31007, Hi-level 39962, Superliners 34080, 34088, 38026, 32031.

*SILVER METEOR, train 94, Hollywood FL Feb 22: (3rd northbound run for Heritage cars) engine 334 (F40); cars 1455, 2915 "Pacific Beach", 2440 slumbercoach, 4646, 4640, 4713, 4610, 20144 (Amclub-snack bar coach as lounge), 8517 diner. Train 87 (St. Pete section), Lakeland FL Feb 22: engine 644 (SDP); cars 1097, 4588, 5015, 5426, 5679, 5423, 8384 diner, 2858 "Rappahannock River", 2857 "Shenandoah River" (last 3 in SR paint). Train 97 (Miami section), Winter Haven FL Feb 23: engine 641; cars 1425, 2861 "Warrior River" (in SR paint), 2029 "Loch Katrine" slumbercoach, 5671, 5476, 5643, 3320, 8004 diner.

*SILVER STAR, train 92 (Miami section), West Palm Beach FL Feb 28: engines 618, 637 (SDPs); cars 1205, 1400, 2836 "Missouri Valley", 2530 "Bobolink", 8026, 5624, 5803, 4594, 4590, 4419, 8013 diner used as lounge.

*SOUTHWEST LIMITED, train 4, Kansas City Mar 5: engines 252 (F40), 511 (SDP); cars 1272, 1154, Hi-level 39926, Superliner 31016, Hi-level 39957, Superliners 34069, 38030, 32027, deadhead Hi-level 39923 on at Topeka. Train 3, Kansas City Mar 5: engines 292 (F40), 633 (SDP); cars 1260, 1250, Hi-level 39905, Superliner 31001, Hi-level 39953, Superliners 34043, 38002, 32005. Train 4, same, Feb 26: engines 291 (F40), 623 (SDP), 232 (F40); cars 1156, 1272, Hi-level 39905, Superliner 31001, Hi-level 39953, Superliners 34043, 38027, 32025, deadheads 10601 buffer car, 3302, 1075, 1265, 4401, 5424, 5430.

*CANADIAN, VIA train 1, Vancouver, Feb 24: engines VIA 1405, CP 8511, CP 1406; cars 9653, 124, 107, dome 517, "Sherwood Manor", "Endako", "Frontier", "Warpath River", dome obs "Strathcona Park".

"SWITCHING.

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AMTRAK RIDERSHIP FIGURES

JANUARY 1981 FIGURES--SECOND COLUMN IS % INCREASE OVER 1980

Metroliners	108,132	-19.9
NE Corr Conventional	333,484	-12.5
Phila-NH-Springfld	22,800	-5.8
NY-Philadelphia	171,286	-16.7
Phila-Harrisburg	75,319	-15.5
NY-Harrisburg	25,046	23.8
TOTAL NE CORRIDOR:	736,067	
NY-Niagara Falls	55,271	2.5
Chicago-St. Louis	6,878	-12.1
Chicago-Milwaukee	22,427	-1.6
Chic.-Detroit/Toledo	35,715	8.5
Chicago-Carbondale	12,989	5.7
Chicago-Quincy	6,357	-6.5
L.A.-San Diego	84,103	2.1
Vancouver-Eugene	10,767	13.8
Washington-Cincinnati	11,613	-4.1
Wash.-Martinsburg	22,945	-.5
Oakland-Bakersfield	10,444	134.5
New York-Montreal	8,727	-9.4
Chicago-Port Huron	8,260	10.9
Chicago-Dubuque	2,639	-17.6
Chicago-Duluth	7,550	--
Chicago-Valparaiso	18,697	2.0
Chicago-Indianapolis	4,816	--
Chicago-Peoria	1,566	--
Chicago-Kansas City	16,882	107.8
Phila.-Pittsburgh	5,560	--
Portland-Eugene	2,780	--
TOTAL SHORT DIST.:	356,986	10.7
Washington-Montreal	30,698	6.7
New York-Florida	54,528	-.6
Chicago-NY/Washington	20,807	12.1
Chicago-Cincinnati/DC	9,821	13.3
Chicago-Seattle	19,490	11.9
Chicago-S.F./L.A.*	41,616	8.7
Chicago-Los Angeles	23,200	5.2
Chicago-New Orleans	15,773	4.4
Chicago-Texas	19,805	35.5
L.A.-New Orleans	6,618	-2.0
L.A.-Seattle	38,442	3.3
Chicago-NY/Boston	26,617	23.6
Boston-Newport News	33,063	-33.1
New York-Savannah	29,850	1.1
Seattle-Salt Lake	13,378	-1.8
New York-New Orleans	36,886	127.3
TOTAL LONG DIST.:	420,592	7.1
Special trains	5,031	-24.7
SYSTEM TOTAL:	1,518,676	-3.7

*SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR plus DESERT WIND

The above Amtrak ridership figures, for January, were released on Mar 9. While Jan ridership was down 3.7% overall compared to Jan 1980, both short- and long-distance figures were up, by 10.7% and 7.1% respectively. Northeast Corridor ridership was off 13.9%, a fact which Amtrak attributed to temporary discount airline fares there (see also the discussion in Ross Capon's testimony, p. 4). Outside the Corridor, most trains continued to show healthy increases in patronage. For the fiscal year to date, which began in October, overall ridership was up .4% over the same period of FY 1980 (6,605,762 riders vs. 6,580,622).

SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR and DESERT WIND riders are included in one figure; separately the SFZ had 31,207 and the DW had 10,409.

RAIL FANTRIPS

Mar 28 & 29: Skyline Limited excursions, Alexandria VA-Front Royal VA, RT on SR Northern Mainline & Manassas Gap Branch; 3-hr layover. $25 (dome parlor car $50). Skyline Limited, PO Box 456, Laurel MD 20810. Lv 8am, arrive back 6pm each day.

Apr 24-26: Spring meeting for TRAIN members & guests, Kennebunkport, Maine, sponsored by New England Electric Rwy Historical Society Inc. Info from: Seashore Trolley Museum - TRAIN Meeting, Box 220, Kennebunkport ME 04046. Deadline Apr 15.

Apr 25-26 & May 16-17: 4449 steam excursions Eugene OR to Sacramento & reverse; package tours, in conjunction with Calif. State RR Museum opening. Info: Trip Chairman, NRHS Central Coast Chap., 850 Steiner, San Francisco 94117. 931-1798.

May 2: Historic Galena Express (Box 6843, Chicago IL 60680). Chicago-Galena IL RT $40 (first class Pullman & open-platform obs., $100). Live entertainment on train, discount coupon book to Galena shops. Can use Visa & Master Charge cards.

Jun 5-20: Scandinavian Rails excursion, incl 125th anniv. of Swedish steam with triple-headed trains; Danish steam trip; rail & water travel in Norway, Sweden, Finland. NRHS Overland Chap., 320 Wisconsin #511, Oak Park IL 60302.

Jun 6: Farewell to Amtrak GG1 excursion, Harrisburg-Lancaster-Philadelphia-Perryville-Harrisburg-Phila RT. Two GG1's & 13 cars; movie runby at speed. Info: NRHS Phila. Chap., PO Box 7302, Philadelphia PA 19101. (215) 947-5769.

One Rail Fantrips listing is free. To be sure of entry in time, send full info at least 4 weeks before event. Be sure to address letter as follows: RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Fantrips Dept, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

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QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Your suggestions for the Kansas City-Denver extension of Amtrak are most timely. Rail travel has become increasingly important as a result of the energy shortage. In the past three years, I have signed several bills which support Amtrak... I share your concern for the successful operation of Amtrak."

--California Governor Ronald Reagan in letter to RTN reader, Feb 19, 1974.

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"When Americans travel between cities, the report said, they overwhelmingly prefer private automobile travel, which accounts for 85 to 90 per cent of all intra-city personal transportation. Commercial air travel has the lion's share of intra-city mileage by public carriers."

--Edmonton (Alberta) Sunday Sun, Jan 25.

(Even more than transit systems?)

"Proposition 13 required that any increases in special taxes imposed by cities, counties or special districts would require a two-thirds vote. The transit tax vote fell short of this mandate, gaining 54% voter approval. Deukmejian said an appellate court must decide the issue because of a constitutional amendment approved by voters in 1978 that declared than an administrative agency such as the Board of Equalization cannon refuse to enforce a statute on constitutional grounds without court approval."

--Los Angeles Times, Feb 11.

(That's really a blast.)

75¢

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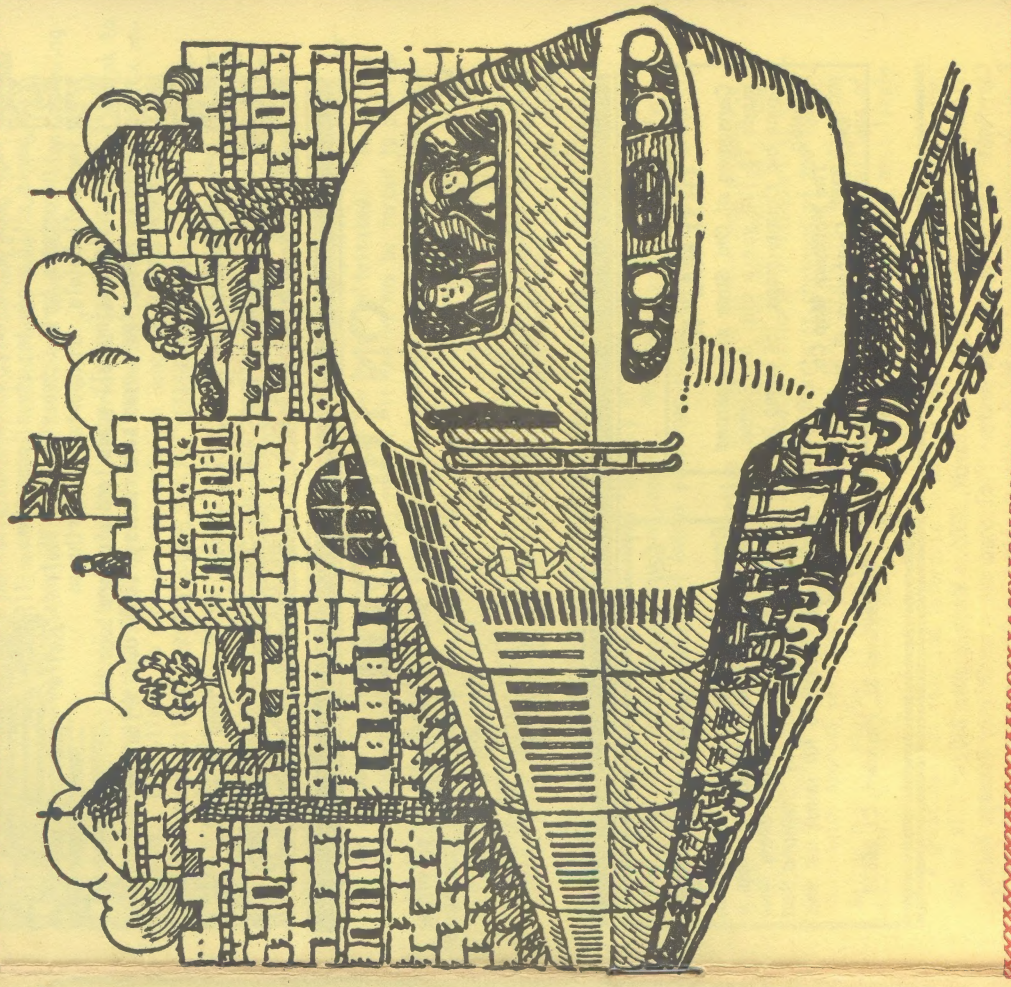

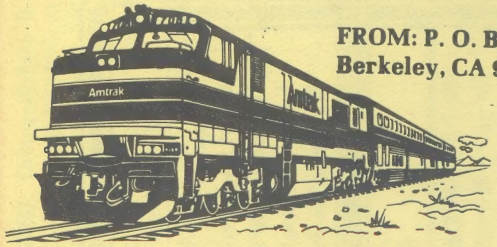

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